

Chapter 2: Planning Process

2 Documenting the Planning Process

Documentation of the planning process, including public involvement, is required to meet FEMA's DMA 2000 (44CFR§201.4(c)(1) and §201.6(c)(1)). This section includes a description of the planning process used to develop this plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how all of the involved agencies participated.

2.1.1 Description of the Planning Process

The Benewah County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving all of the organizations and agencies detailed in Section 1.0 of this document. The County's local coordinator contacted these organizations directly to invite their participation and schedule meetings of the planning committee. The planning process included 5 distinct phases which were in some cases sequential (step 1 then step 2) and in some cases intermixed (step 4 completed though out the process):

1. **Collection of Data** about the extent and periodicity of wildfires in and around Benewah County. This included an area encompassing Latah, Clearwater, Shoshone, and Kootenai Counties to insure a robust dataset for making inferences about fires in Benewah County specifically; this included a wildfire extent and ignition profile.
2. **Field Observations and Estimations** about wildfire risks including fuels assessments, juxtaposition of structures and infrastructure to wildland fuels, access, and potential treatments by trained wildfire specialists.
3. **Mapping** of data relevant to wildfire control and treatments, structures, resource values, infrastructure, fire prone landscapes, and related data.
4. **Facilitation of Public Involvement** from the formation of the planning committee, to a public mail survey, news releases, public meetings, public review of draft documents, and acceptance of the final plan by the signatory representatives.
5. **Analysis and Drafting of the Report** to integrate the results of the planning process, providing ample review and integration of committee and public input, followed by acceptance of the final document.

Planning efforts were led by the Project Director, Dr. William E. Schlosser, of Northwest Management, Inc. Dr. Schlosser holds 4 degrees in natural resource management (A.S. geology; B.S. forest and range management; M.S. natural resource economic & finance; Ph.D. environmental science and regional planning). President of Northwest Management, Inc., Mr. Vincent Corrao, holds two degrees in natural resource management (A.S. forest management and B.S. forest resource management). Together, they led a team of resource professionals that included fire mitigation specialists, wildfire control specialists, resource management professionals, and hazard mitigation experts.

They were the point-people for team members to share data and information with during the plan's development. They and the planning team met with many residents of the county during the inspections of communities, infrastructure, and hazard abatement assessments. This methodology, when coupled with the other approaches in this process, worked effectively to integrate a wide spectrum of observations and interpretations about the project.

The planning philosophy employed in this project included the open and free sharing of information with interested parties. Information from federal and state agencies was integrated into the database of knowledge used in this project. Meetings with the committee were held throughout the planning process to facilitate a sharing of information between cooperators.

When the public meetings were held, many of the committee members were in attendance and shared their support and experiences with the planning process and their interpretations of the results.

2.2 Public Involvement

Public involvement in this plan was made a priority from the inception of the project. There were a number of ways that public involvement was sought and facilitated. In some cases this led to members of the public providing information and seeking an active role in protecting their own homes and businesses, while in other cases it led to the public becoming more aware of the process without becoming directly involved in the planning process.

2.2.1 News Releases

Under the auspices of the Benewah County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Planning Committee, news releases were submitted to area news papers and radio.

2.2.1.1 Radio Messages

A short news release was aired over the KOFE radio station the week prior to the public meetings announcing the goals of the planning committee, the purpose of the mitigation plan, the date and times of public meetings, and contact information.

2.2.1.2 Newspaper Articles

Committee and public meeting announcements were published in the local newspaper ahead of each meeting. The following is an example of one of the newspaper announcements that ran in the local newspaper.

Benewah County Plans to Mitigate Wildfire Risk

Some Benewah County residents may not be as safe from the risk of wildfire as they believe. The county hired a firm to assess the danger and come up with remedies. The study, which started last summer, is being funded with a \$60,000 federal grant from the National Fire Plan. About half the money will be used to pay Northwest Management, Inc. of Moscow for the analysis. The rest is for administrative costs and other expenses the county incurs, Janet Samford, director of the county's emergency services, said. Her department is overseeing the project. The company is collecting aerial photos and gathering details about structures on properties. The location of roads, ponds, and possible fire hazards, such as fuel tanks and conditions of nearby woods are being recorded and stored on a geographic information system.

The Coeur d'Alene Tribe, which has been working for two years on a similar project, is also funded by the federal fire plan. The tribe is providing fire departments with a digital database of photos and information, as well as map books that are carried in emergency service vehicles. Vincent Corrado of Northwest Management said the tribe's work is not being duplicated. "Everything they've done to date will be in the plan," he said. "They've been involved since the beginning and have already done a lot of fuel treatment on and

off the reservation. We have documented those as areas that have already been treated.”

Mr. Corrado said the county's plan involves more than collecting data. It will consider changes to building codes, evacuation plans and removing fuel load from nearby forests. Analysis of fire district readiness will be included, with possible recommendations for more training or equipment.

Public education is part of the assessment, Dr. William Schlosser, a program manager for Northwest Management, said. A survey sent to 210 homes revealed a need for it, he said. For example, about one third of respondents believe they are protected by a rural fire district, when they are not. “They think they're in and have the benefits,” Dr. Schlosser said. “That indicates a need for public education. There may also be an opportunity to expand some districts.” People were also asked to rate the fire risk around their homes. “They give their homes a lower risk rating than professionals would,” Dr. Schlosser said. “That points to a need to educate them on what the risk factors really are.”

Information about the survey and other findings will be presented at three public meetings this month. “There will be a map of the wildland-urban interface,” Dr. Schlosser said. “We'll discuss where we see risk and what kinds of treatments we're considering.”

More than 6.9 million acres and 2,381 structures in the west were burned by wildfire in 2002. The government spent \$1.6 billion that year on fire suppression. Officials hope to reduce that figure by providing money for prevention. The priority is around communities close to public lands, Dr. Schlosser said. “Every county in Idaho has been asked to write a Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan,” Mrs. Samford said. The plans will have to pass muster with two state committees in order to compete for more money to implement the recommendations. A solid plan will make Benewah County eligible for more money for wildfire mitigation, Dr. Schlosser said.

A draft of Benewah County's fire plan is expected to be ready for public review by the end of March. It will be available at fire stations, the emergency service office and public libraries. The public will have two weeks to review the plan and submit comments.

The public meetings will be at the Wellness Center, March 9; Upriver School, March 10; and the Federal Building in St. Maries, March 11. They all begin at 7 p.m.

2.2.2 Public Mail Survey

In order to collect a broad base of perceptions about wildland fire and individual risk factors of homeowners in Benewah County, a mail survey was conducted. Using a state and county database of landowners in Benewah County, homeowners from the Wildland-Urban Interface surrounding each community were identified. In order to be included in the database, individuals were selected that own property and have a dwelling in Benewah County, as well as a mailing address in Benewah County. This database created a list of 1,746 unique names to which was affixed a random number that contributed to the probability of being selected for the public mail survey. A total of 203 landowners meeting the above criteria were selected.

The public mail survey developed for this project has been used in the past by Northwest Management, Inc., during the execution of other WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plans. The survey used The Total Design Method (Dillman 1978) as a model to schedule the timing and content of

letters sent to the selected recipients. Copies of each cover letter, mail survey, and communication are included in Appendix III.

The first in the series of mailing was sent February 18, 2004, and included a cover letter, a survey, and an offer of receiving a custom GIS map of the area of their selection in Benewah County if they would complete and return the survey. The free map incentive was tied into assisting their community and helping their interests by participating in this process. Each letter also informed residents about the planning process. A return self-addressed envelope was included in each packet. A postcard reminder was sent to the non-respondents on February 25, 2004, encouraging their response. A final mailing, with a revised cover letter pleading with them to participate, was sent to non-respondents on March 4, 2004.

Surveys were returned during the months of February and March. A total of 95 residents responded to the survey. Three surveys were returned as undeliverable, and two responded that they no longer live in the area. The effective response rate for this survey was 48%. Statistically, this response rate allows the interpretation of all of the response variables significantly at the 99% confidence level.

2.2.2.1 Survey Results

A summary of the survey's results will be presented here and then referred back to during the ensuing discussions on the need for various treatments, education, and other information.

All of the respondents have a home in Benewah County, and 93% consider this their primary residence. About 34% of the respondents were from the St. Maries area, 26% were from the Santa area, 18% were from the Plummer area, 11% from Fernwood, 4% from Desmet, 4% from Tensed, 3% from Emida, with the remainder were from Benewah, Chatcolet, Sanders, and St. Joe.

Almost all of the respondents (96.5%) correctly identified that they have emergency telephone 911 services in their area. However, their ability to correctly identify if they are covered by a rural fire district was less than hoped. Respondents were asked to identify if their home is protected by a rural or city fire district. Many of the county's residents have rural or city fire protection, with the exception of the homes in the areas of Benewah and Emida, and the remote areas surrounding Santa, Fernwood, the St. Joe river from the St. Maries Fire District east to the county line, and along the Benewah Road between the Tensed Fire District and the St. Maries Fire District. Of the respondents, 84% correctly identified they live in an area protected by a rural or city fire district. Approximately 13% responded they do not have a fire district covering their home, when in fact they do. Only 1% of the respondents indicated that they were outside of a fire protection district when in reality they are inside of a protection district. The additional 1% of the respondents indicated they believe they are in a protection district, but in fact, they are not protected. The only significant category of responses that would merit additional attention based on these answers would be the 13% of respondents that are currently covered by a rural fire district, but are unaware of that coverage.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of roofing material covering the main structure of their home. Approximately 29% of respondents indicated their homes were covered with a composite material (asphalt shingles). About 64% indicated their home were covered with a metal (eg., aluminum, tin) roofing material. Roughly 6% of the respondents indicated they have a wooden roofing material such as shakes or shingles. The additional 1% of respondents had a variety of combustible and non-combustible materials indicated.

Residents were asked to evaluate the proximity of trees within certain distances of their homes. Often, the density of trees around a home is an indicator of increased fire risk. The results are presented in Table 2.1

Table 2.1 Survey responses indicating the proximity of trees to homes.			
Number of Trees	Within 250 feet of your home	Within 75 feet of your home	
None	3%	9%	
Less than 10	22%	46%	
Between 10 and 25	33%	29%	
More than 25	42%	16%	

Approximately 80% of those returning the survey indicated they have a lawn surrounding their home. Of these individual home sites, 94% indicated they keep this lawn green through the fire season.

The average driveway length of the respondents was approximately 1,158 feet long, from their main road to their parking area. Roughly 10% of the respondents had a driveway over ½ mile long, and a corresponding 20% had a driveway over ¼ of a mile long. Of these homes with lengthy driveways, roughly 55% have turnouts allowing two vehicles to pass each other in the case of an emergency. Approximately 65% of all homeowners indicated they have an alternative escape route, with the remaining 35% indicating only one-way-in and one-way-out.

Nearly all respondents (99%) indicated they have some type of tools to use against a wildfire that threatens their home. Table 2.2 summarizes these responses.

Table 2.2. Percent of homes with indicated fire fighting tools in Benewah County.
95% – Hand tools (shovel, Pulaski, etc.)
16% – Portable water tank
16% – Stationery water tank
44% – Pond, lake, or stream water supply close
20% – Water pump and fire hose
41% – Equipment suitable for creating fire breaks (bulldozer, cat, skidder, etc.)

Roughly 36% of the respondents in Benewah County indicated they have someone in their household trained in wildland fire fighting. Approximately 26% indicated someone in the household had been trained in structural fire fighting. However, it is important to note that these questions did not specify a standard nor did it refer to how long ago the training was received.

A couple of questions in the survey related to on-going fire mitigation efforts households may be implementing. Respondents were asked if they conduct a periodic fuels reduction program near their home sites, such as grass or brush burning. Approximately 74% answered affirmative to this question, while 32% responded that livestock (cattle, horses, sheep) graze the grasses and forbs around their home sites.

Respondents were asked to complete a fuel hazard rating worksheet to assess their home's fire risk rating. An additional column titled "results" has been added to the table, showing the percent of respondents circling each rating (Table 2.3).

Circle the ratings in each category that best describes your home.

Table 2.3. Fuel Hazard Rating Worksheet		Rating	Results
Fuel Hazard	Small, light fuels (grasses, forbs, weeds, shrubs)	1	51%
	Medium size fuels (brush, large shrubs, small trees)	2	32%
	Heavy, large fuels (woodlands, timber, heavy brush)	3	17%
Slope Hazard	Mild slopes (0-5%)	1	50%
	Moderate slope (6-20%)	2	35%
	Steep Slopes (21-40%)	3	13%
	Extreme slopes (41% and greater)	4	2%
Structure Hazard	Noncombustible roof and noncombustible siding materials	1	28%
	Noncombustible roof and combustible siding material	3	50%
	Combustible roof and noncombustible siding material	7	6%
	Combustible roof and combustible siding materials	10	16%
Additional Factors	Rough topography that contains several steep canyons or ridges	+2	Average -2.2 pts
	Areas having history of higher than average fire occurrence	+3	
	Areas exposed to severe fire weather and strong winds	+4	
	Areas with existing fuel modifications or usable fire breaks	-3	
	Areas with local facilities (water systems, rural fire districts, dozers)	-3	

Calculating your risk

Values below are the average response value to each question.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Fuel hazard} & \underline{1.9} & \times \text{Slope Hazard } \underline{1.7} = \underline{3.2} \\
 \text{Structural hazard} & + & \underline{3.8} \\
 \text{Additional factors (+ or -)} & & \underline{-2.2} \\
 \text{Total Hazard Points} & = & \underline{4.8}
 \end{array}$$

Table 2.4. Percent of respondents in each risk category as determined by the survey respondents.

00% – Extreme Risk = 26 + points
06% – High Risk = 16–25 points
31% – Moderate Risk = 6–15 points
63% – Low Risk = 6 or less points

Maximum household rating form score was 21 points, as assessed by the homeowners. These numbers were compared to observations made by field crews trained in wildland fire fighting. These results indicate that for the most part, these indications are only slightly lower than the risk rating assigned by the “professionals”. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that Benewah

County landowners involved in this survey have a more realistic view of wildfire risk than the landowners in other Idaho counties where these questions have been asked.

Finally, respondents were asked “if offered in your area, would members of your household attend a free, or low cost, one-day training seminar designed to teach homeowners in the wildland–urban interface how to improve the defensible space surrounding your home and adjacent outbuildings?” A majority of the respondents, 59% indicated a desire to participate in this type of training.

Homeowners were also asked, “How do you feel Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation projects should be funded in the areas surrounding homes, communities, and infrastructure such as power lines and major roads?” Responses are summarized in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Public Opinion of Wildfire Mitigation Funding Preferences.

	Mark the box that best applies to your preference		
	100% Public Funding	Cost-Share (Public & Private)	Privately Funded (Owner or Company)
Home Defensibility Projects	27%	32%	41%
Community Defensibility Projects	51%	44%	5%
Infrastructure Projects Roads, Bridges, Power Lines, Etc.	73%	14%	13%

2.2.3 Committee Meetings

The following list of people who participated in the planning committee meetings, volunteered time, or responded to elements of the Benewah County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan’s preparation.

- John AdamsSt. Maries City Council
- Robert AllenSt. Maries Mayor
- Pete A. Amill.....USFS Forest Service
- Jim BartlettSt. Joe Ranger District
- Greg BasslerNorthwest Management, Inc.
- Jim BennettIdaho Department of Lands
- Nelle ColerPanhandle Area Council
- Vincent CorraoNorthwest Management, Inc.
- George CurrierTimber Plus
- Tera DumanNorthwest Management, Inc.
- Ron Dickerson.....St. Maries Fire Protection District
- Eric Geisler.....Coeur d’Alene Tribe
- Howie Hodgson.....Howie Hodgson Logging LLC
- Maureen Hodgson.....Middlema’am Management

- Debbie Key.....Benewah County Assessor
- Janel McCurdyCoeur d'Alene Tribe
- Mike MeagherGateway Fire Protection District
- Don Mueller.....Benewah County Planning and Zoning
- Kurt NaccaratoIdaho Department of Lands
- Larry Naccarato.....St. Maries Fire Protection District
- Tom Richards.....Northwest Management, Inc.
- Scott RiderIdaho Department of Lands
- Terry RogersFernwood Fire Department
- Janet Samford.....Benewah County Emergency Management
- Arlo Slack.....Idaho Department of Lands
- William E. SchlosserNorthwest Management, Inc.
- Jim Shubert.....Potlatch Corporation
- Jay TruemanFernwood Fire Protection District
- Brad WagnerBureau of Land Management

Committee Meetings were scheduled and held on the following dates:

August 18, 2003

- Introductions of Benewah Fire Committee.
- Presentations by Northwest Management, Inc. and Coeur d'Alene Tribe were made and discussed including an overview of the project and planning process and work already done by the tribe.
- There was also a discussion concerning specific deliverables and scheduling.

September 5, 2003

- Reviewed Coeur d'Alene Tribe Fire Plan areas of interest on the Reservation and how Northwest Management, Inc., can meet those objectives. The Tribe is currently improving data sets for habitat and vegetation types and are working on ortho-photos.
- Discussed how interactions between the County and the Tribe will be conducted.
- Identified personnel in each organization and what activities they will be responsible for. Also, discussed timelines and expectations for project completion.
- Creating a method for completion reporting so that all interested parties were involved and kept up to date on all Fire Plan activities was also discussed at this meeting.

Items to be completed in the near term:

- Committee members with information that should be included in the County's Fire Mitigation Plan should convey this information to William E. Schlosser as soon as possible to make sure we incorporate as much detail at this point as possible. Ideas include where risk is located, on-going mitigation projects in the county, limiting factors

that would logically be incorporated into the plan (policy, planning and zoning), and other opportunities we can incorporate.

- Planning to send out public surveys in September. If a date has been set for public meetings before the last mailing, Northwest Management will include a flyer.
- Need to schedule public meetings in conjunction with the completion of map data.
- Coeur d'Alene tribe has current cadastral database that needs to be compiled and sent to Northwest Management for inclusion in the map data.

September 10, 2003

- Reviewed grant proposal for submission to State. Discussed differences between grant process, issues, and the status of Fire Plans for nearby counties.
- Comments and input were given by the Fire Committee on information gathered so far. Discussed what information was still forthcoming from different individuals or agencies.
- Discussed Fire Resource and Capabilities document including fire district maps and acreage, structures, trucks, people, and training. Most fire protection districts and agencies have received a copy of the survey.

October 15, 2003

- William Schlosser reviewed completed GIS work for Benewah County, rural fire districts, etc. Discussed location of information concerning large timber companies throughout the County including Stimpson, Potlatch, Bennett's, and Forest Capital. Need to go through County Records and Coeur d'Alene Tribe GIS data layers.
- Comments and input were given by the Fire Committee concerning activities through October and November.
- Still need to get cadastral data from Tribe in order to compile map data and mailing list for public survey.
- Discussed specific information collection for the Resource and Capabilities Document.

November 13, 2003

Committee meeting was held in St. Maries at the Benewah County Courthouse.

December 22, 2003

No official committee meeting was held in December, but the following progress report was sent to committee members by Northwest Management, Inc.

- Rural Fire District Maps: Rural fire district maps have been prepared and are available. NMI staff is meeting with Fire District personnel to verify the accuracy of the boundaries. This process generally takes some time because of the volunteer nature of rural and city fire districts. Once the changes are made the maps will be revised.
 - Resources and Capabilities: This information is detailed on surveys given to each fire district chief (rural and wildland). These surveys are distributed to the districts when the initial meetings are made and then summarized in the completed fire mitigation plan.
- USFS, BLM, & Tribal Projects: We have asked each agency operating in the county to detail planned mitigation activities in writing and with GIS layers if available. These will

be integrated into the county wide recommendations that are developed as part of this process.

- Cadastral Data: NMI has not received detailed landowner data in GIS format from the Benewah County Assessor's Office. We are looking forward to receiving a copy on CD so we can Draft the FMP with this information.
- Public Surveys: Will be sent to just over 200 landowners in Benewah County. We decided to wait until January to mail the surveys after the holiday season.
- High Tension Power Lines: We are working on identifying the existing and proposed high tension power lines in GIS format for inclusion in this project as a significant infrastructure resource.

Items to be completed in the near term:

- Committee members with information that should be included in the County's FMP should convey this information to NMI staff as soon as possible to make sure we incorporate as much detail at this point as possible. Ideas include where risk is located, on-going mitigation projects in the county, limiting factors that would logically be incorporated into the plan (policy, planning and zoning), and other opportunities we can incorporate.
- Next committee meeting will focus on the review of the community assessments that we have received and provide input and augment the findings into the plan. In February, the committee will review the resources and capabilities data and a set of recommendations for enhancement of the fire fighting resources available. Public meetings will be scheduled in the time period of February and March.

January 15, 2004

The progress of the community assessments up to this point was discussed and specific comments and input from the Fire Committee were noted.

- General Discussion: Not many specific items brought up, Greg Bassler instructed the committee to further review the document and prepare comments on the assessments. Asked them to focus on areas that we may have missed: areas of special concern, subdivisions, bike trail, etc. The reviews will either be sent to NMI or presented at the next committee meeting.
- Areas of Special Concern that were not Included: the St. Maries Watershed in Rochat Creek, Bike Trail from Plummer to Harrison within Benewah County – 15 miles. Could be an additional ignition source with increased use. Access is difficult for emergency crews and equipment. Poor turnouts and turn around areas for equipment. Should develop some mitigation activities for this trail. The Coeur d'Alene Tribe has control of the trail within Benewah County. The contact is Dean Chapman at the Tribe.
- Defensible Space Around Homes: Nelle Coler sent some of her comments to Janet via e-mail. Janet provided these comments to Greg Bassler. Her concerns seemed to be the Standards for Defensible Space. Kurt Naccarato, IDL, said that the IDL is developing some minimum spacing and pruning guidelines for around structures. May want to contact him for more info. on this, he is basing the guidelines on research performed by Jack Coleman in the Bitterroot Valley.
- Homeowner Education: General statement that the county needs to have education program and mitigation plans in place before the fire hits. Comment that the interest in fire mitigation activities around homes wanes within two to three years following fires in

the area. Another concern is the problem of how not to get the mitigation work done initially, but rather how to continue maintenance over the years on the treated areas.

- Action Items: Should be something in there about how to continue maintenance on the treated areas.
- Missed Residential Areas: Highland Springs and Cassandra Hills and possibly others.

Status of the Resource Capabilities Survey up to this point was discussed at length.

- General Notes: Need to send Resource Capabilities survey to USFS, IDL, and BLM. Also need to insure that the Tensed Fire Department received a copy. Greg instructed all those present on how to fill out the survey and indicated that NMI wanted current capabilities and equipment. There was a suggestion from the committee that all firefighting contracts between the various agencies and local fire districts be included in the assessment.
- Radios and Communication: The switch to narrow band radios was discussed. The USFS will be switched over by 2005 and fully implemented by 2008. The private sector by 2015. Plummer is making the switch to narrow band now. Will need additional repeaters since the radios and repeaters broadcast at lower power levels. Plummer and St. Maries Fire Districts are currently installing a new repeater on Plummer Butte. Plummer also will be working with Tensed to install a new one. Rural districts must be able to communicate with the USFS, BLM, and IDL. Action Item: Find money to update the RFD's communication system to the newly mandated narrow band system. Community Assistance Programs are likely out there for the purchase of these systems. Action Item: Annual County Fire Chiefs Meeting to discuss communications, define protocols, etc. Include public agencies in meeting.
- Fire District Boundary: Everyone is okay with them, St. Maries may be annexing a portion adjacent to Highway 3 towards Black Lake. This is all in the planning stages, nothing firm yet. No other changes anticipated.
- Water Storage: St. Maries and Plummer indicated a need for additional water tenders. Tenders are usually the only water supply when fighting rural fires. Fernwood and Emida also have additional water storage needs. St. Maries has need for an additional Brush Engines.
- Facilities: St. Maries is building a new Station. Plummer needs a new facility – trucks barely fit within the current building and they have no meeting room. Tensed would also need a new facility for equipment and staging.
- Volunteer Retention: All indicated that they have problems retaining volunteers due to lack of volunteer spirit and people leaving for jobs elsewhere. Suggestions to retain volunteers included reimbursements for firefighting training, include the volunteers under the State Retirement Plan, find other labor forces – women.
- Firefighter Training: Many opportunities available to train the RFD firefighters in wildland training. Mainly the IDL trains and is willing to train the local forces. There is interest statewide for additional training in wildland fire. UFA money may go towards training.
- Disaster Preparedness: There is a local Type III Incident Command Team that is supposed to assist in any emergency situation. Action Item: Develop a program to define the structure of the local Type III team, provide additional training to members of the team and to increase participation from the various fire districts. Cross training between the various disciplines involved needed (not just more fire-training, training situations

other than fire). Five northern counties of Idaho are in the process of developing a new Emergency Operational Plan. Benewah County is currently being formulated. CERT-Community Emergency Response Teams-an avenue of getting more people involved in emergency response and training. This program should be an Action Item in the Mitigation Plan.

February 20, 2004

Specific hazard areas and infrastructure were discussed at length and unofficially marked on current maps.

- Water Sources: St. Maries Watershed (Rochat Creek) - need to define borders and contact landowners. Committee feels this area definitely needs some type of fire mitigation treatment. St. Joe City Watershed (Bond Creek) – need to determine if this community actually uses surface water from this watershed or if they have personal wells. Fernwood – recently drilled municipal wells, but committee thought that they may use old surface water system as back up.
- Escape: Committee highlighted secondary routes that will be a priority for fire protection. Alder Creek Flats was a major concern. Road through to St. Maries is not an acceptable escape route due to steepness, narrow, etc. The Mutch Creek-Carlin Creek Road through to St. Maries was suggested as an alternative. This road is a major haul road for Potlatch Corp. and is much less hazardous.
- Cellular towers: Marked current towers' approximate location and noted that there is an additional tower currently being constructed on Plummer Butte.
- Railroad: The only active route is a once-a-day trip along St. Maries River.
- Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes Bike Path: Approximately 15 miles needs treatment. There is a history of fires (possibly arson) along this route, so committee is concerned about structures and recreators in this area.
- Additional treatment areas outside of NMI defined WUI: Want to add Cassandra Hills and Highland Springs Subdivisions to assessments; however, they are included in the 95 percentile range of the WUI. Also, want to extend St. Maries treatment area to include Hells Gulch and another smaller area near the river, include more Sanders Road structures, include more structures in subdivision along Highway 3, and connect WUI treatment area between St. Maries and Plummer so that Bike Path is included. Also noted that many structures along St. Joe River Road will be included in ½ mile buffer along the roadway. Make sure that Bond Creek (St. Joe City) is included in treatment areas for ½ mile road buffer.
- Resource Capabilities: noted that many agencies, private citizens, etc. have trucks/water tenders that can be used in some fires, but are not on officially qualified list. Additionally, many trucks that meet federal standards are not listed. NMI has received limited responses to surveys, but more are promised
- Past Treatments: Heyburn State Park officials have completed (or are near completion) 300 foot buffers around Chatcolet and Benewah Lake residential clusters.

Items to be completed in the near term:

- Meet with the local fire chiefs in Plummer on February 24, 2004 to complete resource and capabilities surveys and ask about specific problem areas that may not have been included in the assessments.

- Include cadastral data in plans and maps as it is completed by Debbie Key.
- 205 public surveys were sent out on February 18, 2004. There were some problems with the mailing list, but we have a random cross section from landowners. Postcard reminders will be sent out on February 25, 2004 and a final mailing will be sent on March 4, 2004. We also need to put a news release in the St. Maries Gazette Record.
- Public meeting dates will be March 9, 10, and 11 in Plummer, Fernwood, and St. Maries, respectively. NMI will post maps and provide a power point presentation at all three meetings.

March 31, 2004

Northwest Management, Inc. brought copies of final Draft Fire Mitigation Plan and Draft Appendices for committee review. Bill Schlosser went through both documents explaining the components of each section. The committee was asked to review the documents over the next two weeks and bring revisions, comments, and questions to April 8, 2004 meeting.

April 8, 2004

Vincent Corrao led a discussion on the input process and the documentation needed to meet the requirements of FEMA and the National Fire Plan.

Revisions to the plan by attending committee members:

- Comment by Janet Samford in Chapter 5 on U of I - funded education information programs should be evaluated before the County looks into other education activities. Nelle Coler then suggested that the County look into the other County education programs before they enter into new ideas, need to share information first.
- A reference to the well-developed Firewise CD that talks about home defensible space requirements should be made in document. The CD can be tailored to the County and costs \$2500.00.
- Plummer Fire Station comment by Mike Meagher explained that the \$150,000 should be increased to \$500,000 to start a new station.
- Nelle Coler has some new grant funding sources and will send them to NMI to include in the plan. Nell also asked if an explanation footnote could be put on the bottom of the map to note why the lines of the fires were straight along property lines.
- Eric Geisler and Janel McCurdy request that the CDA Tribe be included in all areas of the plan where the other landowner's names are mentioned. We can use their logo and the Tribal Counsel will have to sign off on the plan.
- Nelle Cohler requested on page 131 that Goosehaven name be corrected.

Other comments and discussions included:

- John Adams, City Council, noted that milepost 7 to 8 up USFS Road #50 to Rochet Creek looks like a high risk area and asked who was responsible. The IDL explained that the landowners in the area are responsible for treating the risk and that the State would provide technical assistance.
- Public comment locations discussed with the committee include: the Courthouse and libraries in Fernwood, Plummer, St. Maries, and Tensed. Local TV stations will advertise the plans as well as the local radio station. Requests were made to have flyers at local stores to direct people to the libraries.

- Arlo Slack provided written comments and will provide additional comments to the plan.
- Larry Naccarrato, St. Maries Fire Protection District, made available their logo to scan and include in the plan. Larry also provided written comments to the plan.
- Jim Bartlett, USFS will send written comments and potential treatment areas in the Sanders Road and North/South Ski Bowl area with maps and descriptions.
- Brad Wagner, BLM, was not present and his input needs to be included.
- Mike Meagher, Plummer Fire Protection, will also provide their logo to be included in the plan.

2.2.4 Public Meetings

Public meetings were held during the planning process, as an integral component to the planning process. It was the desire of the planning committee, and the Benewah County Commissioners to integrate the public's input to the development of the fire mitigation plan.

Formal public meetings were scheduled on March 9, 2004, at Plummer, Idaho, on March 10, 2004, at Fernwood, Idaho, and on March 11, 2004, at St. Maries, Idaho. The purpose of these meetings was to share information on the planning process with a broadly representative cross section of Benewah County landowners. Both meetings had wall maps posted in the meeting rooms with many of the analysis results summarized specifically for the risk assessments, location of structures, fire protection, and related information. The formal portion of the presentations included a PowerPoint presentation made by Project Director, Dr. William E. Schlosser. During his presentations, comments from committee members, fire chiefs, and others were encouraged in an effort to engage the audience in a discussion.

It was made clear to all in attendance that their input was welcome and encouraged, as specific treatments had not yet been decided, nor had the risk assessment been completed. Attendees were told that they could provide oral comment during these meetings, they could provide written comment to the meetings, or they could request more information in person to discuss the plan. In addition, attendees were told they would have an opportunity to review the draft plan prior to its completion to further facilitate their comments and input.

The formal presentations lasted approximately 1 hour and included many questions and comments from the audience. Following the meetings, many discussions continued with the committee members and the general public discussing specific areas, potential treatments, the risk analysis, and other topics.

Attendance at the public meetings included 6 individuals at the Plummer meeting, 6 in Fernwood, and 13 at St. Maries. The following are comments, questions or suggestions from the meetings:

2.2.4.1.1 Plummer Public Meeting

March 9, 2004 – Coeur d'Alene Tribal Wellness Center

Conference Room A & B- 7:00 pm

William E. Schlosser, Northwest Management, Inc., gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the goals and guiding principles of the National Fire Plan, FEMA, and the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Other topics discussed by Dr. Schlosser were hazardous or at risk areas specific to Benewah County and potential treatments or solutions that would be recommended by the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Many maps were presented by Northwest

Management, Inc. How these maps were created and what data was used was explained at length.

Throughout the course of the presentation attendants were encouraged to make comments or suggestions. These comments and discussions are summarized here:

- Instead of creating new fire districts in currently unprotected regions, it is more economical to combine the Gateway and Tensed Fire Departments and then expand to include at least some of the residents of Emida, Benewah, and Alder Creek Flats. The larger district would then be eligible for more financial aid and would provide better fire protection to both areas.
 - Automatic Aid: need a communication system between Gateway and Tensed Fire Departments, so that both crews are notified at the same time of an emergency. This would eliminate the need of one department to contact the other for additional resources after the first one arrives on the scene.
 - Tribal property is not included in tax base, but makes up a large portion of the fire districts. This stretches money and resources too far lessening the effectiveness of everybody's fire protection.
 - Many rural folks do not want to be included in a fire district because they do not want the increased tax burden; however, most do not realize that being included would decrease their insurance rates.
- Discussed the opportunity for volunteer firefighters to receive a 2% reduction on their home mortgages. This would increase the volunteer base and retention of seasoned fire firefighters, which is lacking throughout the Benewah County.
- Discussed the comparability of the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan and the FireSafe program.

2.2.4.1.2 Fernwood Public Meeting

March 10, 2004 – Upriver School Gymnasium - 7:00pm

William E. Schlosser, Northwest Management, Inc., gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the goals and guiding principles of the National Fire Plan, FEMA, and the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Other topics discussed by Dr. Schlosser were hazardous or at risk areas specific to Benewah County and potential treatments or solutions that would be recommended by the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Many maps were presented by Northwest Management, Inc. How these maps were created and what data was used was explained at length.

Throughout the course of the presentation attendants were encouraged to make comments or suggestions. These comments and discussions are summarized here:

- A representative from the USDA Forest Service explained that they (the Forest Service) would not receive funding for fuel reduction projects if a fire mitigation plan was not accepted by both state and federal agencies. Currently, 70% of Forest Service projects in Benewah County are directed at the Wildland-Urban Interface. There are many areas on the forest that have a lot of dead and dying trees due to a variety of causes, but the Forest Service doesn't seem to be able to do anything about it because of the litigation and red tape involved. Some of the laws are being changed to alleviate some of this problem (Healthy Forests Act). Other ways to get around this problem is to prescribe

burn instead of harvesting trees and using multiple purpose “incidental cuts” as part of other projects.

- There is currently no formal list of water resources available for fire suppression efforts on private lands, but various fire departments and agencies have aerial photography. Landowners are encouraged to report any water resources; however, there are specific regulations on what type of water source can be used.
- There is a need throughout the County to educate homeowners on whether or not they are included in a fire district and the benefits of joining if they are interested.
- Fernwood Fire Department has major problems with access issues including private driveways, bridges, etc. Need to make improvements to both county and private roads, so they are safe for large emergency vehicles. This might include creating turnouts and turn around areas, making sure roads have a solid surface, clearing fuels, or widening the existing road. One of their trucks is too big for the tasks for which it is being used and they have serious need for a smaller brush truck.
 - Fernwood Fire Department has a mutual aid agreement with St. Maries Fire Department and wildland fire agencies.
 - At least ½ hour response time to farthest reaches of Fernwood Fire District. Many residents have scanners, so by the time the fire department gets all their equipment to the scene there is already a crowd. This not only dangerous, but it also makes things more difficult for the trained firefighters.
 - In order to include Emida in Fernwood Fire District, they would have to build a substation because response time would be over an hour. Many residents of Emida do not want to pay the extra taxes to be included.
 - Fernwood Fire Department has problems attracting and retaining volunteers and also lacks adequate training.
- Firewood permits are only issued during the most hazardous times of the year from a fire standpoint. People are getting frustrated with different regulations concerning wood gathering, but this is good way to reduce hazardous fuels in the forest. Another way of reducing fuels is allowing grazing throughout public lands.
- Discussed how the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan coincided with the DOE, DEQ, the State, and other government agencies.
- Many out-of-staters own property in the area and generally do not want to pay to included in fire district. These people are difficult to contact in an emergency and present a higher risk to adjacent property owners because they do not maintain a “firesafe” homesite. One solution may be to enforce building codes or making sure these people are aware of the fire risk.
- In general, residents of Benewah County do not want to see any mandatory regulations concerning private property.

2.2.4.1.3 St. Maries Public Meeting

March 11, 2004 – St. Maries Federal Building

Main Conference Room - 7:00 pm

William E. Schlosser, Northwest Management, Inc., gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the goals and guiding principles of the National Fire Plan, FEMA, and the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Other topics discussed by Dr. Schlosser were hazardous or at risk areas specific to Benewah County and potential treatments or solutions that would be recommended by the Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan. Many maps were presented by Northwest Management, Inc. How these maps were created and what data was used was explained at length.

Throughout the course of the presentation attendants were encouraged to make comments or suggestions. These comments and discussions are summarized here:

- Discussed the St. Maries Watershed and how it compared to the recent fire-related problems to the Bonners Ferry Watershed.
- Fire departments throughout the County are not prepared and do not have the appropriate equipment. St. Maries also has difficulty attracting and retaining volunteers. Mutual aid between local departments, the Tribe, IDL, and the Forest Service is common. Resources from the Coeur d'Alene BLM and Potlatch Corporation are also available.
 - Discussed consolidation of Gateway and Tensed Fire Districts and subsequent inclusion of parts of Benewah, Alder Creek Flats, and Emida. They have tried several times to locate a tanker truck at the Benewah School House, but it never gets voted through. The School House would be a good place to house a substation.
 - Firefighters lives cannot be put at risk to protect a home that has not taken any fire prevention precautions.
 - Coon Creek Road is a good access route to the Benewah Valley for fire suppression equipment of as an escape route.
- Rivers and streams should be included as significant infrastructure because even very small water resources can be useful to fight fires.
- Access issues are a problem for both the public and fire departments. Many roads are one-way in, one-way out with no turnouts or turn around areas, which increases response time and effectiveness. Also, public access to many forest roads has been cut off. This can lead to confusion during a fire event with people going the wrong way and not being able to get through. What are the priorities? Fire access? Wildlife? Need to sign appropriate fire escape routes.
- Discussed different methods of fire prevention education. The IDL puts on Smokey the Bear programs for grades 3-5 in public schools. In addition, they also take 5th graders on a field trip to explain the effects of fire, forestry, and recreation.

2.2.4.1.4 Meeting Notices

Public notices of this meeting were printed in the **St. Maries Gazette Record** the weeks of February 25 and March 3, 2004.

Benewah County Plans to Mitigate Wildfire Risk

The Benewah County Commissioners have created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan Committee to complete a Wildfire Mitigation Plan for Benewah County as part of the National Fire Plan authorized by congress and the Whitehouse. The Benewah County Fire Mitigation Plan will

include risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where fires are likely to ignite and where they are likely to spread rapidly once ignited. Northwest Management, Inc. has been retained by Benewah County to provide wildfire risk assessments, mapping, field inspections, interviews, and to collaborate with the committee to prepare the plan. The coordination for this effort is being provided by Janet Samford, Benewah County Emergency Management Coordinator. The committee includes rural and wildland fire districts, land managers, elected officials, agency representatives, and others. Northwest Management specialists are conducting analysis of fire prone landscapes and making recommendations for potential treatments. Specific activities for homes, structures, infrastructure, and resource capabilities will be proposed as part of the analysis.

One of the most important steps in gathering information about fire risk in Benewah County is to conduct a homeowner's survey. Northwest Management, Inc., in cooperation with local fire officials, have mailed a brief survey to randomly selected homeowners in the county seeking details about home construction materials, proximity to water sources, and other risk factors surrounding homes. This survey is very important to the success of the plan. Those homes that receive a survey are asked to please take the time to complete it thereby benefiting the community overall.

The planning team will be conducting Public Meetings to discuss preliminary findings and to seek public involvement in the planning process in March. For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan project in Benewah County contact your County Commissioner, Northwest Management, Inc. project managers Vincent Corrao or William Schlosser at (208) 883-4488, or the Benewah County Emergency Management Coordinator Janet Samford at (208)245-5331.

All Meetings at 7:00 PM.

March 9, 2004 – Plummer Coeur d'Alene Tribe Wellness Center Conf. Rooms A & B

March 10, 2004 – Fernwood Up River School Gymnasium

March 11, 2004 – St. Maries Federal Building Conference Room

2.3 Review of the WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Review of sections of this document were conducted by the planning committee during the planning process as maps, summaries, and written assessments were completed. These individuals included fire mitigation specialists, fire fighters, planners, elected officials, and others involved in the coordination process. Preliminary findings were discussed at the public meetings, where comments were collected and facilitated.

The results of these formal and informal reviews were integrated into a DRAFT Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This plan was given to members of the planning committee (including the Benewah County Commissioners and the Panhandle Area Council on March 31, 2004. Review of the DRAFT document by the Benewah County Wildland Fire Committee involved in the planning process was conducted from March 31, 2004 until April 7, 2004.

Edits proposed by committee members were integrated into the revised plan. This revision was sent out for public review by placing copies of the plan at the County Courthouse and area libraries (3 in total). A press release announcing this public review process was launched simultaneously. The public review was conducted from April 12 – April 23. Actual changes were accepted until May 7, 2004. All of the public review comments were integrated into the final plan for acceptance by the County Commissioners on May 10, 2004.